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FEBRUARY 2ND, WORLD WETLANDS DAY

An annual celebration vital for the world's ecological health

On February 2, 2004, United States Embassies from South America to the Middle East will join their local communities to commemorate World Wetlands Day, an annual celebration of the vital importance of wetlands to the world's ecological health and of efforts to conserve these invaluable habitats. The day marks the anniversary of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, signed February 2, 1971 in Ramsar, Iran.

This year's theme, "There's wealth in wetland diversity --- don't lose it," emphasizes the biological and cultural diversity of wetlands and their important role in sustaining people physically and emotionally. Wetlands are a source of water, food, recreation, transportation, and, in some places, are part of the local religious and cultural heritage. They provide groundwater replenishment, benefiting inhabitants of entire watersheds.

Wetlands play a vital role in storm and flood protection and water filtration.

In addition, they provide a rich feeding ground for migratory birds, fish, and other animals and boost local economies through opportunities for the harvesting of aquatic resources and ecotourism.

Despite the great value of wetlands, they have been shrinking worldwide, including in the United States. In 1987 the United States joined the Ramsar Convention,

an international treaty that aims to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve those that remain. The treaty's 144 Contracting Parties have designated 1,404 wetlands sites totaling more than 300 million acres for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Most recently, on Earth Day 2004, President Bush announced an aggressive new national initiative to move beyond a policy of "no net loss" of wetlands to an overall increase of wetlands in America. The President's goal is to create, improve, and protect at least three million wetland acres over the next five years in order to increase overall wetland acreage and quality.

The United States designated three new Ramsar sites last month: the 2500-acre Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve in San Diego County, CA; the 160,000-acre Grassland Ecological Area in western Merced County, CA; and the 1000-acre Kawainui and Hamakua Marsh Complex located on the northeast coast of the island of Oahu, HI. That brings the total number of U.S. Ramsar sites to 22, covering nearly 3.2 million acres.

For further information, visit the State Department's Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science website at <http://www.state.gov/g/oes>

and the Ramsar website at <http://ramsar.org>.

RICE TO PROMOTE BUSH DEMOCRATIC VISION IN EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST

Itinerary includes eight European countries, Israel, the West Bank

Washington -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will visit eight European countries, as well as Israel and the West Bank, February 3-10 with the aim of advancing President Bush's agenda in cooperation with European friends and allies, according to the U.S. Department of State.

The trip comes in advance of the President Bush's scheduled February 22-25 visit to Europe.

Secretary Rice is scheduled to visit the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Israel, the West Bank, Italy, France, Belgium and Luxembourg.

During the course of her visit, the secretary intends to promote President Bush's vision of democracy and freedom as the keys to peace and prosperity, according to a State Department statement. She will work to identify a common agenda for 2005 with European partners and U.S. partners in the Middle East.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher described that common agenda January 31 as one that includes "fighting terrorism, building democracy, fighting disease like AIDS, and cooperating around the world ..."

Another focus of Rice's trip, according to Boucher, will be "to take advantage of opportunities between the Israelis and Palestinians, but also to continue and perhaps make even more concrete as we go forward the initiatives on modernization, reform and democracy in the Middle East that are embodied in such things as the Forum for the Future, the other G-8 outreach programs, the NATO outreach programs, the European outreach programs."

The third focus, Boucher said, "is to support and work with European institutions as well to express our continuing support for united Europe and recognize that as Europe goes through a lot of discussions and changes in this current period, that the United States has always been one of the supporters of a united Europe and an active European role and to work together with them on many of the things involved in that process."

Boucher also provided additional details on Rice's scheduled itinerary January 31 during the State Department's daily press briefing:

Rice will arrive in London late on the evening of February 3;

No events are scheduled until Friday, February 4, when she will be in London, and then go on to Berlin, where she will spend the night;

Saturday, February 5, Rice will be in Berlin, Warsaw [Poland] and finally Ankara [Turkey], where she will spend the night;

Sunday, February 6, Rice will have meetings in Ankara and then go on to Tel Aviv, Israel, where she will stay overnight;

Monday, February 7, she will be in Jerusalem and the West Bank, departing that afternoon for Rome; and

Tuesday, February 8, she will spend the morning in Rome, and then go on to Paris.

Secretary Rice is scheduled to deliver a speech on the afternoon of February 8 in Paris, a speech that Boucher described as a “chance to discuss her view of U.S.-European relations, current policy and other things, as we go forward.”

Asked why Rice chose Paris as the place in which to give a major policy speech, Boucher said Rice “felt Paris was one of the places where there’s a lot of debate and discussion about the U.S., about Europe, about common goals, about how we achieve our agenda, and ... she wanted to be part of that discussion and put her ideas into the mix.”

On Wednesday, February 9, the spokesman said, she will spend the morning in Paris, go on to Brussels, Belgium, and then to Luxembourg, where she will spend the night.

In Brussels, Rice will meet with Belgian government officials, as well as NATO and European Union (EU) colleagues, but the schedule of meetings has not yet been finalized.

The stop in Luxembourg is not only a chance to talk to the Luxembourg government, Boucher explained, but is also where Rice will meet with the so-called EU Troika because Luxembourg currently heads the EU’s rotating presidency.

The EU Troika comprises the current, most recent past and future EU presidencies, usually represented by the foreign ministers of the three countries.

On Thursday, February 10, Rice will have meetings in the morning in Luxembourg before returning to Washington.

In each of the places she visits, Rice will have a number of high-level meetings, including meetings with prime ministers and foreign ministers.

GENOCIDE HAS BEEN OCCURRING IN DARFUR, U.S. GOVERNMENT REAFFIRMS

United States welcomes U.N. commission on Darfur but differs on conclusion

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington - Even though the U.S. government welcomes the work that has been completed by a United Nations commission of inquiry on Darfur, the United States still stands by its own conclusion reached September 2004 that genocide has been occurring in Darfur, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said February 1.

Speaking to reporters at the department’s regular noon briefing, Boucher stressed: “We stand by the conclusion that we reached that genocide had been occurring in Darfur. And we think that the continued accumulation of facts on the ground, the facts that are reported here in the commission’s report, supports that view, that conclusion that we reached and continue to hold.”

“Nothing has happened to change those conclusions,” Boucher said. “We stand by those conclusions.”

Boucher’s comments came in response to the January 31 release of a report by the U.N. International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, which concluded that the government of Sudan did not pursue a policy of genocide in Darfur but that crimes against humanity and war crimes have been committed that “may be no less serious and heinous than genocide.”

Boucher told reporters the U.S. government will continue to work with the international community to stop the violence and the atrocities in Sudan. “We’re calling on the Government of Sudan to take steps,” he said. “We’re calling on the rebels to take steps, immediate action to stop the violence.”

He said the United States is continuing to work with the African Union to expand its peacekeeping presence in Sudan. Additionally, he said, “we are continuing to support the efforts being made for a political solution, support the efforts being made by Africans in countries like Nigeria to try to reach a political solution.”

Boucher said now that the U.N. commission has completed its report, “we need to move ... to the stage of

accountability.” As part of that process, he said, “we are discussing elements of our proposals for accountability with other [U.N.] Security Council members and with interested African countries.”

“We believe that the best way to address these crimes, as detailed in the report, is to establish a U.N. and African Union tribunal that would be based in Arusha, Tanzania. It would involve African countries integrally in the process, in keeping with the African Union’s leading role in Darfur,” he said.

“We understand that the commission itself talks about the International Criminal Court (ICC),” Boucher noted, but he cautioned, “We think it’s important for the Security Council to consider the various options, and we believe that having accountability for these crimes in a tribunal that’s based in Arusha, Tanzania, is the best way to ensure accountability.”

When asked about the case being referred to the ICC, as suggested by the commission, Boucher said there should be no “automatic referral to the ICC” and that “when you look in more detail at the facts and the legal aspects of this, we do think that the tribunal in Africa is a preferable way, is the better way to ensure that there is accountability to these crimes.”

Boucher said there are a number of advantages in referring the case to a tribunal in Africa. Such an option, he said, “would involve the Africans and the African Union in playing a continuing role for accountability, as they have played one in trying to stop the crisis in Darfur to begin with.”

Such an option, he said, “also has the practical advantage of building on the existing infrastructure of the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

“That would allow the Sudan tribunal to commence more rapidly, to take advantage of the expertise in lessons learned in dealing with the crimes in Rwanda.”

Boucher also pointed out that the U.N. Commission of Inquiry, in its reporting, details crimes that took place in 2001 and 2002. “Those crimes pre-date the establishment of the International Criminal Court, and ... therefore the court wouldn’t have jurisdiction over those crimes,” he said.

“So you have all the crimes of 2001 and 2002 that couldn’t be handled by the International Criminal Court because of the way its statute reads, whereas a tribunal in Africa could deal with all the crimes that have been committed in Darfur from the beginning.”

For these reasons and others, Boucher told reporters, the U.S. government is proposing to other governments the establishment of a tribunal in Arusha. “We think it’s important that the council look at the various options seriously,” he said.

Boucher said the United States is also proposing the establishment of a U.N. peacekeeping mission for Sudan that could “support the African Union and the eventual deployment to Darfur, as conditions permit.” He said the United States is also making proposals on how to increase pressure on the parties to abide by their commitments under current standing U.N. resolutions that are already in place.

“We have, in our consultations already with a number of council members on this question, made clear we believe it’s time to move toward sanctions. We have raised a number of measures, including oil sanctions and targeted sanctions, with other council members, and we’ll continue discussion of those,” he told reporters.

U.S., RUSSIA SEE ACCORD ON RUSSIAN WTO ACCESSION POSSIBLE IN 2005

USTR Robert Zoellick, Russia’s German Gref after Zurich meeting

The United States and Russia could reach a deal on Russia’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2005, the two countries’ top trade negotiators said January 31 after eight hours of meetings in Zurich, Switzerland.

U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick and Russian Federation Minister of Economic Development and Trade German Gref both expressed optimism during their remarks to journalists.

"If we keep up this momentum, we should be able to reach our bilateral agreement ... on accession during the course of this year," said Zoellick.

Gref went even further, saying a "very good window of opportunity" exists for Russia to have all the negotiations - including with other WTO members - completed "by the end of December."

Zoellick said the United States will "work closely with our Russian partners to help work through the multilateral aspects with all 148 economies in the WTO to expedite Russia's accession, in addition to our bilateral work."

Following is a transcript of their remarks:
Marriott Hotel
Zurich
January 31, 2005

USTR Zoellick: The Minister and I had an excellent meeting today. Both our Presidents have placed a very high priority on trying to complete our bilateral work on Russia's WTO accession. And as part of that, President Bush wrote a letter to President Putin suggesting that Minister Gref and I meet to review where we stand on the full agenda, and indeed attached a list of specific items that we believed needed resolution. So the Minister and I and our teams met for about 8 hours today to review every item on that list. In the area of industrial goods, we made excellent progress, and I think there is only a small number of items that we still need to resolve the tariffs that Russia would have upon accession.

In the area of services, our colleagues came up with possible solutions in a number of areas. The Minister and I reviewed those and were comfortable with those solutions. And we will now return to consult with other ministers and our industry to see if these compromises will enable us to close out a number of these sectors since both our Finance Ministers will be meeting next weekend around a G-8 meeting, we will also seek their help in narrowing the differences in the financial sector.

In agriculture, we have only one technical issue left to resolve in the bilateral meat agreement. And once that issue is solved, as we believe it can be, that will open the way for us to work on the other agricultural issues including the tariffs and working with Russia and other parties on the multilateral agricultural rules, such as subsidies. And we also agreed to activate a special [bilateral] agricultural trade group that will have repre-

sentatives of both agricultural and trade ministries to try to solve problems such as sanitary and phytosanitary issues. We also reviewed a host of systemic issues -- these relate to the overall WTO rules. And I think we have a very shared outlook on how to solve these issues. We both need to share information with one another about questions that Russia and the U.S. have. And the U.S. agreed to work with Russia and some other key countries in the WTO to try to help move these issues forward in the WTO working party chaired by Ambassador Johannesson of Iceland.

We also reviewed the need to have effective enforcement in the intellectual property rights area.

To keep progress moving quickly, our teams will be meeting in Geneva [on WTO] in mid-February to try to follow up on some of these items. Of course our Presidents are scheduled to see each other, I think on February 23. And so we will both report to our Presidents. And we've agreed to try to set up another Ministerial meeting in late March or early April to keep an intense focus on this effort.

So in summary, I think we've been able to accelerate work across all the areas. And I think both sides have a renewed sense of energy. And I just want to thank Minister Gref for his leadership because many of these items cut across different ministries, so we're relying on his help to coordinate these within Russia. And I also want to thank both teams, who met as recently as this week in Paris to try to narrow the gaps on these issues. So, I come with a sense of a good prospect that if we keep up this momentum, we should be able to reach our bilateral agreement, so that's the U.S.-Russian agreement on accession, during the course of this year. And we will work closely with our Russian partners to help work through the multilateral aspects with all 148 economies in the WTO to expedite Russia's accession, in addition to our bilateral work.

Minister Gref: [translation] Thanks a lot. [unintelligible] manage to come up with a common language. And to a great extent of that there is very little left to what my colleague has just said. [unintelligible] right now. There are great thanks to Ambassador Zoellick and to Dorothy who flew over to this place without any weekend, and to the whole of the great team on the American side. We have accomplished rather notable, close and very friendly work which ended a lot for a good result, a good outcome to be achieved, which made us optimistic, upbeat for work in the near future. I believe that we have

every ample opportunity in order to fulfill the assignment as posed by the two of the Presidents to substantially expedite our work, our progress, and to secure the expedient Russian accession to the WTO. I believe we have every chance to do that. For this meeting today we will be pursuing a more vigorous effort. Undoubtedly enough we will achieve that result.

Moderator: Any questions? Quickly.

Reporter: Mr. Zoellick, Mr. Gref, Daniel Pruzin, Bureau of National Affairs. Do you believe with the progress made at this meeting today that it will be possible to conclude the bilateral agreement early enough to allow Russia to join the WTO at the Hong Kong Ministerial meeting?

USTR Zoellick: As I said, I believe we should be able to, if we stay on track and we made good progress today and over the past week or so, that we should be able to complete the bilateral accession during the course of 2005. Second, I discussed with Minister Gref ways that the United States could help with the multilateral accession process. I can't speak for the other members and how quickly they will resolve their issues. So at this point, I think we want to try to complete our bilateral accession by, as soon as possible in 2005, and simultaneously work on the multilateral aspects.

Minister Gref: [translation] A slight addition on my part. Once we have the negotiations with the United States completed, in due time in that case we will have a very good window of opportunity to have all the things done by the end of December.

Moderator: Any other questions? Anyone?

Reporter: [translation]...managed to settle the pricing issue, the gas pricing issue?

Minister Gref: [translation] I can say we have rather seriously progressed in terms of the understanding of the positions as taken by both sides. We have in detail discussed this issue. And we came to understand the sensitivities our partners have. We have explained away our position, and apparently we have sense a pattern which will allow for the solution to this issue. And I guess after further consultations and the exchanges of opinion, further we will be in a position to come up with a final solution.

USTR Zoellick: I would agree with that, but I would

just refine for a Russian audience that the U.S. interest in this is probably different than what you probably covered with Europe. As I discussed with the Minister, we are focused on the narrower issue of energy as an input, particularly for fertilizer. And the Minister explained some of the broader energy pricing issues, which I was pleased to learn about, but our focus is on solving this narrower issue. And as the Minister said, I think we have a basis for doing that.

Reporter: Jacob Greenberg with Bloomberg News. Did you get any agreement on the access of financial services, insurance companies and particularly the issue of opening of branches across Russia?

USTR Zoellick: On financial services, we identified the variables we needed to review for securities, banking and insurance. And I think we're closer together on many of those variables. But they are interconnected because depending on the results on one variable, one can be a little bit more flexible on another. And this in an area where our finance ministers also have an important interest. So I think it's probably best that we discuss with them before we report to you. And we'll rely on their help too.

Minister Gref: [translation] Well I'll be late for my plane.

Moderator: Thank you all.

USTR Zoellick: And I really want to thank the Minister, he's done a great job with all of this.

[reporter question off tape regarding the reference to the bilateral meat agreement]

USTR Zoellick: No, we have an agreement related to tariff rate quotas for pork, and beef, and poultry. And we had initialed it but hadn't signed it. There's one small technical issue left we have to resolve with that that our teams are working on now. I don't know if they'll finish today or in a couple of days or something. But then that has to be, the language has to be checked in English and Russian. But we're hoping to try to get this done before our President's meet.

Reporter: Just a yes or no question - do you expect any major breakthrough when the Presidents meet.

USTR Zoellick: Major breakthrough?

Reporter: In the negotiations.

USTR Zoellick: I think the way that Presidents get breakthroughs is they tell us to do the work and we report to them, in my humble experience.

EPA, FORD TEST PROMISING CLEAN DIESEL TECHNOLOGY

Clean diesel combustion more fuel-efficient than gasoline, EPA says

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Ford Motor Company are refining and testing the potential for commercial application of a promising clean diesel technology that meets stringent EPA tailpipe emission standards and is more fuel-efficient than gasoline.

According to a January 28 EPA press release, this is the second phase of a research agreement between Ford and EPA to examine a new emissions-control technology called clean diesel combustion (CDC), which was developed and patented by EPA.

"Diesel engines are an extremely attractive technology to help achieve EPA's future emissions standards," said Jeff Holmstead, EPA assistant administrator for air and radiation. "The challenge has been to maintain diesel's efficiency while making the diesel ultraclean in a cost-effective manner."

Ford and EPA showcased a Ford Galaxy minivan to demonstrate the clean diesel technology at EPA's National Vehicle and Fuel Emissions Laboratory in Michigan. The diesel minivan gets 30 percent to 40 percent better mileage than a gasoline minivan, and meets EPA's emission standards for nitrogen oxide (NOx). According to EPA, diesel is typically 25 to 40 percent more fuel efficient than gasoline.

CDC is one of several emerging clean diesel technologies that promise to meet EPA tailpipe emission standards and improve fuel economy in cars, sport-utility vehicles and trucks.

CDC technology achieves EPA NOx standards through a new diesel combustion process that does not produce NOx during fuel combustion, thus avoiding the need for NOx controls in the exhaust system.

Because NOx can react in the atmosphere to form ground-level ozone, preventing NOx emissions is necessary to protect air quality, public health and the environment.

Information about clean diesel combustion technology is available at <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/technology/index.htm> - partnership

Please Note: Most texts and transcript mentioned in the U.S. Mission Daily Bulletin are available via our homepage: www.usmission.ch

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